



*Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance*


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**Online Guide Transmittal 2020-32
April 29, 2020**

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff
From:  Sarah Stuart, Associate Commissioner for Change Management
Re: Cross Programs: Temporary Telework Procedures Due to COVID-19

Overview

In response to the current state of emergency, the Department is transitioning to handle its core application and case processing operations remotely. DTA is issuing temporary telework procedures to support the work necessary to ensure that active clients do not experience a disruption in benefits and to prioritize new applications.

Purpose

The purpose of this Online Guide Transmittal is to advise staff of temporary telework procedures.

**TAFDC and
EAEDC
Procedural
Changes**

Applications

TAO managers will ensure that TAFDC and EAEDC applications received via telephone and DTACConnect.com are assigned for processing in a timely manner. Applications will be assigned on a rotating basis to staff working the day the request is received or assigned. Web application data sheets must be attached and saved to the case Narrative. Until a central print option is available for the TAFDC/EAEDC application, clients who request to apply by phone must have the Rights and Responsibilities read to them. The applicant must agree to the following statements:

1. The information you give as part of your application is subject to verification.
2. By applying for benefits DTA will share your Social Security Number (SSN) and the SSN of each household member with the Social Security Administration and other government agencies to check the identity and eligibility for benefits of the people in your household.
3. DTA will get and share information with banks, schools, government and other agencies to check your eligibility for benefits.
4. If this applies to you, DTA will verify your immigration status through the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).
5. DTA will tell electric, gas and telephone companies that you get public benefits so you can get discounts.
6. DTA will share information about you and your dependents under age 19 with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). DESE will certify your dependents for school breakfast and lunch programs.
7. DTA will share information about you, your dependents under age 5 and anyone pregnant in your household with the Department of Public Health (DPH). DPH refers these individuals to the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program for nutrition services.
8. DTA will share your information with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for the purpose of enrolling you in the Heat & Eat Program.

If the client agrees, the case manager must write a narrative detailing that the Rights and Responsibilities were reviewed, understood and agreed to. If the clients does not agree in full, the application must be denied as a voluntary withdrawal.

During the application interview case managers must refer clients to the DTA website to view all program brochures. DTACConnect.com is in the process of being updated with the same brochures which will be found through the following links: ***Just applied for TAFDC? - Click here for information about the program and more supports for you and your family!*** and ***Just applied for EAEDC? - Click here for information about the program.***

Applications
(cont.)

A verbal self-declaration can be accepted for bank accounts and other assets. Verbal declaration suffices. Staff no longer need to follow up with the case after 60 days.

Important: If an applicant does not complete their TAFDC/EAEDC interview after two scheduled application interview appointments, the case manager must deny the application using the reason: failure to keep appointment for review.

TAFDC/EAEDC
Forms

Forms that call for a case manager/Department representative signature are not to be signed by staff at this time. The disposition of the document and BEACON signature will serve as affirmation that the form and information provided were reviewed for completeness and eligibility. If a form is missing required information 3 cold calls must be attempted to inform the client of the missing information and assist in obtaining that information.

Note: Direct Deposit must not delay approval of a TAFDC/EAEDC case. For those clients who wish to have their benefits issued through Direct Deposit, the CA/DD form no longer requires that a financial institution representative complete and sign the form. The client must complete Section 1 and 2, leaving the Certification area of Section 2 blank. The client is still required to sign the form in Section 1.

Assignment of Third-Party Recovery (A-16) and the Agreement to Repay Cash Assistance (RE-1) forms will be available in BEACON for central print in the future. While these forms are not currently available in BEACON the case manager must notify the client of the relevant policy and make a note to follow up with the form if it is still applicable at recertification.

The Relocation Benefit Verification Form (RBV) is in the process of being added to BEACON and available to centrally print with a VC-1. In the meantime, the form will be made available online and can be emailed to a client.

Case managers must send out the Absent Parent Information Form and the Authorization for Reimbursement of Assistance (AP-SSI-IAR) and to follow up on the case in 60 days. If after 60 days the form has not been signed and returned, a series of 3 cold calls must be made to the client and a second VC-1 must be sent. If the client does not respond to the 2nd VC-1 notice, and the form has not been returned with the signature(s), the case must be closed for Failure to Assign Child Support Rights or Failure to Comply with Lien Procedures as appropriate.

**SNAP
Application
Requests**

If staff receive a request for a paper SNAP application, they should encourage the client to complete an application online at DTACConnect.com. If the client is unable to do so, or would prefer a paper application be mailed to them, staff are to email DTA.SNAPOutreach@MassMail.State.MA.US with the client's name, mailing address, phone number and preferred language using *Client Paper Application Request* in the subject line.

**Work Program
Participants**

Transportation payments will continue for eligible TAFDC clients with an approved EDP and active activity. Currently, the temporary suspension of work program requirements does not affect eligibility for monthly transportation payments unless a client reports to DTA that they are no longer participating in an approved activity or are no longer employed. SNAP Path to Work Participants will continue to be eligible for transportation reimbursement as appropriate, if providers make the request to the SNAP Employment and Training Manager.

**FEW
Responsibilities**

To ensure TAFDC clients with approaching EDP end dates who are actively participating or employed continue to receive transportation payments, FEWs must monitor the Active EDPs view in BEACON and the TAFDC Caseload Dashboard. Based on the information the FEW must:

- make three cold call attempts to contact clients with approaching end dates to confirm if their EDPs need to be reauthorized for transportation supports to continue; and
 - work directly with ESP providers to support all clients who remain actively engaged in their programs.
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**Interpreter
Services**

Per established procedures staff must utilize the Language Line for any clients with no or limited English proficiency. Systems enhancements are underway to match calls and available documents to staff with the relevant bilingual abilities. Staff must refer documents in need of translation to their manager by sending a secure email with an image of the document. Managers will refer the document to staff with the ability to translate or to central office for contracted interpreter services as needed.

**ASL Video
Translation**

Clients who need ASL translation will do so through webex in coordination with the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH). Staff must refer to the Online Guide: Home>CrossPrograms>HarperADA>AmericanSignLanguage (ASL) Protocols "Securing MCDHH Services for Deaf or Hard of Hearing clients" for full detailed procedures. In coordination with their TAO management team, an online referral request for remote translation services is to be made.

ASL Video
Translation
(cont.)

Once MCDHH has made arrangements for the translator, they will notify the translator and the requestor of the date and time. The DTA staff person holding the appointment is responsible for scheduling the remote session with the client and translator using Webex.

Note: The email of the client and the translator must be obtained in advance of using Webex.

Appeals

When preparing for an appeal, the Department representative must follow the established procedures in reviewing the case for relevant information and evidence in advance. Staff must:

- capture images of evidence relevant to the appeal (e.g., notices, verifications, regulations, etc.) using a screenshot utility such as the Snipping Tool;
- paste the images to a Word document;
- save the Word document using the Appeal Number as the filename;
- send a SECURE e-mail to the Hearings Officer (with a cc to the Division of Hearings and the TAO management team) that includes the staff's DTA-assigned phone number and the Word document attached.

Staff must e-mail the Word document to the Hearings Officer by noon on the business day before the date of the hearing. At the time of the scheduled appeal, the Hearings Officers will call the case manager at the phone number provided in the e-mail to conduct the telephonic appeal.

**Department
Brochures**

Key Department brochures are available for clients on the DTA website. This includes specific program brochure as well as other important information for clients such as the Domestic Violence and What Noncitizens Need to Know brochures.

**Funeral &
Burial Unit**

Manual notifications are typically used for denials of funeral and burial requests. At this time, these notices will be saved as a PDF and emailed to the applicant and funeral home

Questions

If you have any policy or procedural questions, after conferring with the appropriate TAO personnel, please have your Systems Information Specialists or TAO management email them to DTA.Procedural Issues.

Systems issues should be directed to the Systems Support Help Desk

Questions
